

STILLWATER STATE FOREST
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT NOTICE
June 14, 2006

RE: Duck-to-Dog Timber Sale Project Proposal

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Stillwater Unit, is proposing the Duck-to-Dog Timber Sale Project. DNRC is in the initial stages of public involvement and project development for an environmental analysis that will be summarized in an Environmental Assessment (EA). This proposal would harvest three to five million board feet of sawtimber and provide revenue for the support of Montana public schools.

The State school trust lands being considered include portions of Sections 29, 30, 31, and 32, all in T33N, R23W, and Sections 13, 14, 15, 23, 24, 25, and 36, all in T33N, R24W. The proposed harvest area would likely be 1,000 to 1,500 acres. This project is part of an ongoing effort to produce revenue for the school trust and maintain a healthy and productive forest into the future.

DNRC is interested to know your issues or concerns about this project. A 30-day comment period provides the public an opportunity to become involved at the initial stage of this project. This early involvement would provide information to identify potential issues and carry out the first stages of the analysis process. If we do not receive communication from you during the comment period, your name will be removed from the address list for this project.

The purpose of the proposed project, along with maps and some general information are enclosed. The comment period will be open until July 14, 2006. Please comment by calling Elspeth Pevear at (406)881-2674, emailing epevear@mt.gov, or sending written comments to Stillwater State Forest, P.O. Box 164, Olney Montana 59927.

Sincerely,

Brian Manning
Unit Manager
Stillwater State Forest

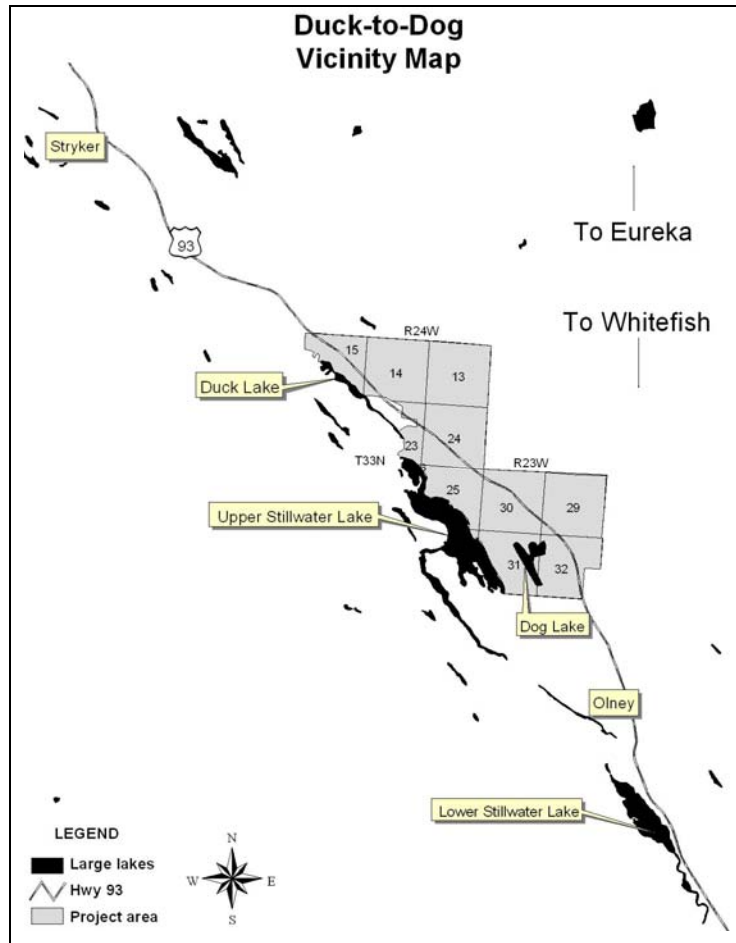
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STILLWATER STATE FOREST DUCK-TO-DOG TIMBER SALE INITIAL PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Stillwater Unit, is proposing the Duck-to-Dog Timber Sale Project. DNRC is in the initial stages of public involvement and project development for an environmental analysis. This proposal would harvest 3 to 6 million board feet (mmbf) of sawtimber and provide revenue for the support of Montana public schools.

The State school trust lands being considered include portions of Sections 13, 14, 15, 23, 24, 25, and 36, all in T33N, R24W, and Sections 29, 30, 31, and 31, all in T33N, R23W. The Public Buildings and Common Schools trusts are the beneficiaries of funds made from this sale. The harvest area would likely cover from 1,000 to 1,500 acres.



This notice initiates a 30-day comment period providing the public an opportunity to become involved at the initial stage of the project. In addition, this document provides general information about the proposal and its objectives. Comments and concerns you may have about harvesting timber and associated activities, such as roadwork and site preparation, are welcome and will be considered. The comment period will remain open until July 16, 2006.

PROJECT PARAMETERS

The lands involved in this proposed project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the support of common schools (public school construction). The State Board of Land Commissioners and DNRC

are required by law to administer these lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for these beneficiary institutions, as required in section 77-1-202, *Montana Codes Annotated (MCA)*. However, DNRC would consider opportunities other than tree harvesting that would produce long-term revenue to the trusts.

DNRC will manage the lands involved in this project according to the philosophy and standards in the State Forest Land Management Plan (SFLMP), which states:

"Our premise is that the best way to produce long-term income for the trust is to manage intensively for healthy and biologically diverse forests. Our understanding is that a diverse forest is a dynamic forest that will produce the most reliable and highest long-term revenue stream... In the foreseeable

future, timber management will continue to be DNRC's primary source of revenue and primary tool for achieving biodiversity objectives."

Furthermore, the project design will follow *Montana's Administrative Rules for Forest Management* (Annotated Rules of Montana 36.11.401 through 36.11.450).

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- Generate revenue for the school trusts while promoting biodiversity on State ownership. Biodiversity would be promoted by managing for appropriate stand structures and species compositions based on ecological characteristics, such as landtype, habitat type, disturbance regime, and unique characteristics.
- Increase future timber productivity within harvest units.
- Contribute to the annual timber-harvest-volume targets of DNRC and the Northwestern Land Office (NWLO). DNRC is required by State law (77-5-221 through 223, MCA) to harvest approximately 53.2 mmbf annually State-wide.
- Apply Best Management Practices (BMPs) or meet design criteria necessary to promote long-term water quality during logging and road-construction operations. Road construction may include reconstruction, new construction, obliteration, and maintenance.
- Improve public access to Dog Lake. DNRC may work with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to create recreational opportunities.
- Reduce the potential of wildfires in the wildland urban interface by reducing fuels.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT AREA AND OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE AREA TO MEET THE OBJECTIVES

The project area is located between Duck Lake and Dog Lake, north of Olney and south of Stryker. Access to the project area includes Highway 93 and Fort Steele, Ewing, Woods Lake, Ritsenburg, McCabe, and Dog Lake roads.

Road building, harvesting, thinning, and planting has occurred in and around the proposed areas since the 1920s.

The State has invested time and money into:

- reconnaissance surveys,
- updated stand-level inventories,
- watershed and sediment-source surveys,
- sensitive-plant surveys,
- noxious-weed surveys, and
- transportation/logging system assessments.

The following map displays the project area with several silvicultural and harvesting options that may be appropriate for this area. The map is not intended to portray that harvesting would be planned for all of the displayed acres.

The proposed treatments fit timber-stand conditions and would allow for a desired future condition to be met on all or a portion of these areas.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED TREATMENTS BY AREA

➤ AREA A

Area A contains a mature (150+ years old) stand of mixed conifers. Species include Engelmann spruce, western larch, lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, Douglas-fir, and western red cedar. Due to the maturity of this stand, many of the trees have begun declining or have fallen over and lay jackstrawed on the ground; as a result, fuel loading is high. Mistletoe is

present in some western larch and little to no regeneration is present in the understory. A commercial harvest in this area would open the stand, promote regeneration, and reduce on-the-ground fuels.

All of this area is accessible with ground-based logging machinery.

- **AREAS B**

These areas contain numerous timber species, from western red cedar, western larch, and Engelmann spruce to Douglas-fir; therefore, flexibility exists in the types of prescriptions and tree species that could remain following harvesting (see *AREA MAP*, page 4). Seedtree, shelterwood, group-selection, and various levels of individual-tree-selection treatments could be applied with acceptable silvicultural results.

Most of these areas are accessible to ground-based logging machinery. Some areas may require a winchline. Existing spur roads may be opened and temporary spur roads may be built for access.

- **AREAS C**

These areas are comprised of mixed-conifer stands with pockets of dead and dying subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce (see *AREA MAP*, page 4). Areas heavily infected with root rot and Indian paint fungus could be treated with a mosaic of small clearcuts in conjunction with commercial-thin and seedtree prescriptions. This form of treatment would increase the vigor of the remaining trees, increase regeneration, and emulate the natural processes of fire by creating a mosaic of age classes.

Most of this area is accessible to ground-based logging machinery; some areas may require a winchline. Existing spur roads may be opened and temporary spur roads may be built for access.

DUCK TO DOG TIMBER SALE PROJECT INITIAL PROPOSAL AREA MAP

